



**POWERING  
POSITIVE CHANGE  
THROUGH MAJOR  
EVENTS**



# Hosting major events in the UK is not just about what happens on the field of play, it is so much more.



**UK Sport**  
**Head of Events**  
**Esther Britten**

**Major sporting events can reach all corners of society, bring people together and provide moments of inspiration by showcasing extraordinary sporting moments.**

These moments give us an opportunity and a platform from which to inspire positive change, one of the three ambitions set out in [UK Sport's 10-year Strategic Plan](#).

With 100 events forming the nation's international event hosting aspirations for the next decade, our sector has a wealth of opportunities to positively impact societal and environmental change in communities across the UK.

With that in mind, we're asking you, the major events community, to use the unique assets and characteristics of your events to power positive, meaningful and lasting change for the people in our communities and the environment around us.

This means ensuring your events are purpose led – to consider not only what social impact your event can have in the community, but how you can embed innovative ideas to promote equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and environmental sustainability into your event delivery.

We know every event is different, and this document provides guidance and examples of how you can use yours to deliver impactful, sustainable and inclusive events authentically, and how UK Sport can help.

We look forward to working with you to continue to reach new audiences, uplift communities and help unite the nation.

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# 1.

## UK Sport's commitment to powering positive change

**Success on the world stage gives high-performance sport a unique platform and we have a moral responsibility to use it for social good; demonstrating our impact is also vital for building a sustainable future – not just for elite sport but for hosting major events in the UK.**

Powering positive change through high-performance sport will ensure we remain relevant to future fans and can help secure funding from government and potential commercial sponsors.

Through extensive stakeholder consultation and strategy development, we have identified three impact areas where we, and the wider high-performance community, have a credible and authentic opportunity to power positive change.

Major events are a vital part of this work, and we will support and empower you to drive change in these areas, and in any additional area where you feel your event could have impact.

If you want more information on what we're doing to drive change, [please contact UK Sport Social Impact Manager Matt Wookey](#)



### 1. Improving health and wellbeing

From prioritising the physical and mental wellbeing of every member of our high-performance sport community and empowering athletes to speak out about the adversity they've overcome, to helping others form positive relationships with physical and mental wellbeing.



### 2. Celebrating the power of our differences (equality, diversity and inclusion)

From helping high-performance sport to be a place where the nation's exceptional talent belongs and has the opportunity to be the best it can be, to inspiring communities to connect with each other as they discover common ground and shared purpose.



### 3. Driving environmental sustainability

From significantly reducing our own environmental impact as a sector, to enabling athletes to find their voice and inspire their followers to form a better relationship with the environment.

# 2.

## Harnessing the power and platform of major events

**Major events can be highly effective catalysts for change. They bring together key stakeholders across sport, the public and private sectors who can collectively influence positive change for society.**

These partnerships can achieve fantastic results due to the fixed nature of an event timeline, which ensures serious commitment to delivering social impact plus, they motivate and engage a wide range of audiences via their association with a major event.

**What do we mean by harnessing the power and platform of major events?**

Essentially, this means leveraging your event to have a positive impact by:



## How do I harness the power and platform of my event?

Through our work with event partners and reflecting on the events hosted in 2022, where we supported more events than any other year, we've learnt that there are four key areas to consider when setting out your plans to deliver purposeful events.

# 1.

## Define and embed your purpose

First you need a clearly defined purpose outlining how your event will power positive change proportionate to its size and scale. This could include:

- delivering a social impact for the host community
- operating to high standards of environmental sustainability
- embedding EDI across the event.

You may choose to focus on one or all of these areas.

For example, the 2021 Rugby League World Cup set out to make a positive impact on people's lives across communities by delivering the biggest, best and most inclusive Rugby League World Cup ever. You can see more details in the case study section on [page 08](#).

The most successful projects had social impact, EDI and environmental sustainability embedded in their plans, from start to finish and beyond, and used research and insight through every phase of the event impact cycle including community listening and co-development of initiatives with target audiences.

To maximise impact, activity should align with wider organisational plans and activities of stakeholders such as the national governing body, host city, local authority and/or host venue and either:

- build on and amplify previous work by the project stakeholders, or
- kick-start new activity that can have a lasting impact on communities.

# 2.

## Develop objectives and an action plan

You should prioritise a concise number of SMART objectives across your chosen impact area(s) that focus on tangible, measurable outcomes across a defined timeframe.

Creating an action plan with tasks, deadlines, responsibilities and KPIs gives you a framework to keep your project on track, and summarised versions of this plan are a clear way to communicate your activities with wider

event partners, sponsors and spectators.

Your objectives and action plan should be realistic against the resource you have committed to deliver them.

[To access our action plan template contact Matt Wookey](#)

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# 3.

## Build partnerships

Partnerships are key to success, delivering impact through working together with:

- delivery stakeholders
- community groups
- suppliers
- charities
- sports clubs
- commercial partners
- not-for-profit organisations.

The most successful partnerships are underpinned by:

- shared goals or objectives, which are measurable
- different skills and/or assets of partners which are complementary
- open communication and clear roles and responsibilities among partners
- ongoing reflection of the partnership and amended approaches as required.

Partnerships don't always have to be about the provision of funding, value-in-kind partnerships can also have significant impact.

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# 4.

## Deliver, evaluate and learn

The delivery timeframe for your impact work will depend on your specific objectives and the actions required to achieve them, but typically activity will peak in the immediate periods before, during and after the event.

To understand the true impact of your activity and to share knowledge with the sector – monitor, evaluate and communicate your event impact at regular intervals through the project, and share your learnings across the major events community.

In addition, by being clear and vocal about targeted event outcomes, you can bring your audiences, athletes, media and potential partners with you on your impact journey.

When using an event to start or accelerate social impact activity, ensure there are long-term owners for the initiative(s) beyond the lifecycle of the event.

The support we'll provide UK Sport-funded events, to help unlock an event's full potential, is detailed on [page 20](#).

# 3.

## Major event case studies

By sharing examples of the programmes from 2022 events, we can demonstrate how a purpose-led event is formed, the successes and the challenges they faced and the key learnings from each.

We understand that events are unique and have varying resources so a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't apply, but these case studies can help guide and inform you to put your own plans in place.



# RUGBY LEAGUE WORLD CUP 2021

**With social impact and inclusivity at its heart, Rugby League World Cup 2021 (RLWC2021), delivered in 2022, took powering positive change to another level with its forward-thinking approach.**

Demonstrating its focus on inclusivity from the start, the event was the first time a Rugby League World Cup had brought men's, women's, wheelchair and physical disability competitions into a single mega event.

Before a ball had been kicked, the organisers had racked up a sizable social impact – comprising a total investment of £30.1 million into the host communities, grown from an initial fund of £635,000 across 18 towns and cities, predominantly in the north of England.

## Focus areas

RLWC2021 had a core focus centred around social mobility, tackling inequalities through providing more opportunities.

Working in some of the most socially deprived areas of the country, a range of programmes were developed across six main impact areas:

- creating strong communities
- growing the game of rugby league
- stimulating physical activity and health
- developing people
- improving mental wellbeing
- boosting the economy.

A cultural festival also ran parallel to the event to celebrate the 'power of together'. The festival exhibited the power of performance, the power of poetry and the power of connecting, across a touring dance theatre, public spaces and libraries.



## Host towns and cities

1. Bolton
2. Coventry
3. Doncaster
4. Greater London
5. Hull
6. Kirklees
7. Leeds
8. Liverpool
9. Manchester
10. Newcastle
11. Preston
12. Sheffield
13. St Helens
14. Tees Valley
15. Trafford
16. Warrington
17. Wigan
18. York



Social impact was within our DNA from the very outset of the project and this approach ensured we could maximise the opportunity while making a difference in local communities.

Rugby League World Cup 2021 CEO, Jon Dutton

## Plan development

Initial investment to create a wider impact from RLWC2021 was secured from the beginning, at the same time as the event itself in 2015, seven years before it was staged.

Through executive planning, workshops and analysis of the social need of the host and rugby league communities, the above priorities for delivering social impact came together.

Being vocal about their aims to create a wider impact attracted several partners. Co-developing their approach with these partners including Community Integrated Care and Movember, enabled RLWC2021 to meet their objectives and the needs of the targeted communities without developing an overly large executive social impact team.

By considering impact and inclusivity through every stage of operational planning, they were able to wrap these themes into the fabric of the event. This included introducing 'A Moment Against Silence' at the start of selected tournament matches – a campaign by Movember to support the conversation around mental health and the stigma associated with getting help.

## Partners

RLWC2021 had a vast array of social impact partners including:

- UK Sport
- Sport England
- Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
- The National Lottery
- Movember
- Rugby League Cares
- UNICEF UK
- Community Integrated Care
- Rugby Football League
- International Rugby League
- Assura
- Arts Council England
- Mental Health UK

## Key learnings

1. Impact meant more to the tournament than simply increasing participation, this message resonated with partners to create the impressive final programme.
2. Early commitment to purpose at the heart of the tournament ensured that the social impact directive was clear, authentic and factored into all aspects of tournament delivery.
3. Being vocal about aims aided partnership development, leading to potential partners approaching RLWC2021 about being involved and thus growing its social impact reach.



Our approach allowed us to build partnerships, beyond the sport and this was both powerful and valuable in being purposeful before the tournament, and has ensured that the impact created will be long lasting.

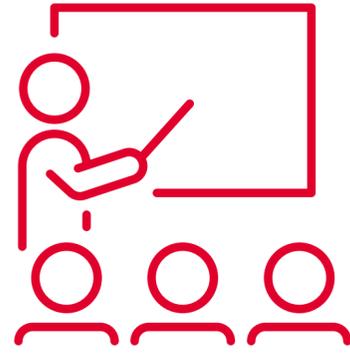
**Rugby League World Cup 2021 Social Impact Director, Tracy Power**

## Results

RLWC2021 had a wide range of social impact programming, which is reported separately in its post-event impact report.

An example of their impact so far includes the Mental Fitness and Awareness Programme, a first-of-its-kind programme focused on educating young athletes, coaches, volunteers, competing teams, match officials and teammates about their own mental fitness and that of those around them.

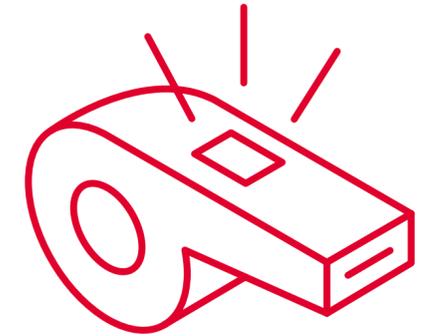
As a result, through their partnership with Community Integrated Care, the target audience was placed at the heart of programme development which led to a wide-ranging series of initiatives for volunteers, these varied from setting up photography and media clubs, to developing homemade soaps for teams competing in the tournament.



**Over 400 workshops  
were delivered...**



**...reaching 9,674 young  
athletes...**



**...and 386 coaches  
across the UK**

**92%**  
**OF PARTICIPANTS  
STATED THEY  
HAD A BETTER  
UNDERSTANDING  
OF MENTAL HEALTH**

**OVER 350  
VOLUNTEERS  
WITH SOCIAL CARE  
NEEDS WERE INVOLVED  
IN THE TOURNAMENT**

# UEFA WOMEN'S EURO 2022

**The UEFA Women's EURO 2022 catapulted women's football into mainstream public consciousness, culminating in an extraordinary sporting moment to rival any other as the Lionesses were victorious in the final at Wembley Stadium.**

Home success aside, as tournament organisers, The FA's aims for hosting were to deliver a record-breaking tournament and to have a tangible impact by growing the women's game.

## Focus areas

The FA established a national legacy programme focussed on three sporting and social objectives.

1. Equal access for all girls to play football in school and clubs
2. Diverse workforce of coaches, referees and local leaders delivering and organising football for their communities.
3. Inclusive, safe and welcoming environments for every woman and girl to play competitive or recreational grassroots football, irrespective of ability, disability, age or ambition.

The legacy programme prioritised fast-tracking the women's football strategy 'Inspiring Positive Change' across the nine host cities, setting out national goals for female participation across schools, recreational and competitive grassroots football, referees and coaches.

In conjunction with the football legacy, a wider social impact was sought via the school programme, arts programme and heritage programme that unlocked the history of women's football.



- ### Host towns and cities
1. Trafford
  2. Manchester
  3. Wigan & Leigh
  4. Sheffield
  5. Rotherham
  6. Milton Keynes
  7. Brighton & Hove
  8. Southampton
  9. London (Brent, Ealing & Hounslow)



We started planning for the legacy of this tournament over two years before a ball was kicked, and working alongside host cities we planned to accelerate our national Women and Girls' Football Strategy in nine geographical locations. Through local stakeholders coming together, we have made a step change in female football provision and this model is now being replicated across the game.

**UEFA Women's EURO 2022 National Legacy Manager, Stacey Mullock**

### Plan development

Leveraging their hosting of the UEFA Women's EURO to catalyse women's football was part of The FA's rationale for bidding for the tournament.

The legacy team engaged deeply with the nine host cities to develop Local Legacy Delivery Groups. These groups incorporated both football and non-football stakeholders who had a shared interest in leveraging the tournament for sporting and social outcomes.

Following extensive work, centrally and with these groups, national legacy priorities and a range of tailored host city objectives were formed. Each host city was heavily devoted to their plans, which were further facilitated by a £1 million investment from Sport England.

The plan continued to evolve over time under the legacy brand 'Inspired by England 2022' and arts and heritage programmes were devised in partnership with Arts Council England.

The team remained receptive and reactive to opportunities, including exploring how commercial partners could get involved and harnessing the momentum of the tournament as the Lionesses progressed.



## Partners

UEFA Women's EURO 2022 legacy programme had many key partners including:

- The FA
- UEFA
- Sport England
- UK Sport
- Arts Council England
- Local Legacy Delivery Groups – consisting of local government, local education bodies and local/regional football partners (County FAs, grassroots and professional clubs).

## Key learnings

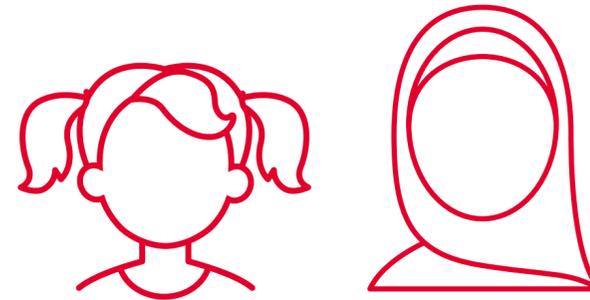
1. Integrating a dedicated central legacy team, within The FA, to work with dedicated Host City Legacy Leads and appointing a central Insight Officer to track activities leading to continuous feedback and refinement were invaluable.
2. Setting up dedicated Local Legacy Delivery Groups in each host city, responsible for objective setting and delivery, resulted in tailored plans that met the needs of each location, while continuing to deliver against the wider objectives of the programme.
3. Creating a specific legacy brand 'Inspired by England 2022' brought together all the exciting, powerful and inspiring stories and content from fans, sponsors, partners and community groups and opened commercial possibilities that would not have been possible under the overall tournament brand.

## Results

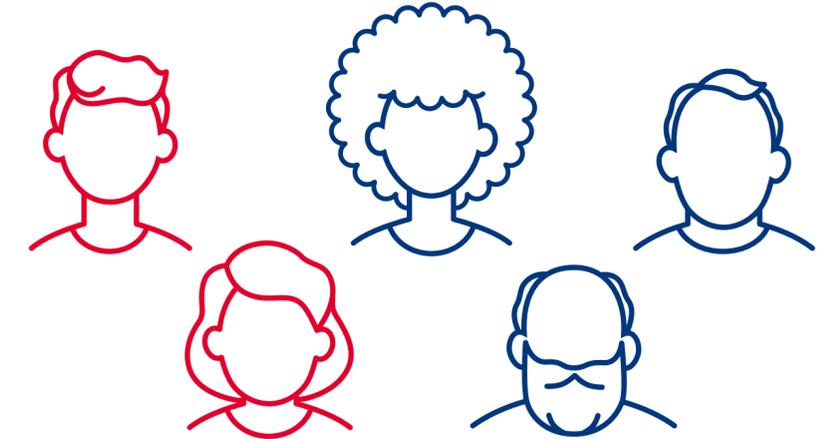
The FA set out to provide 500,000 new football opportunities to engage women and girls across the UEFA Women's EURO host cities by 2024. This comprised:

- 120,000 more girls regularly playing football in schools and clubs
- 300 new FA-qualified female coaches
- 1,000 women and girls completing the entry-level Playmaker Award
- 350 new FA-qualified female referees
- 20,000 more women playing football for fun, fitness and friendship
- 7,000 more women and girls regularly playing competitive football in grassroots clubs.

As of February 2023 achievements included:



**416,000 new opportunities  
have been created for  
women and girls**



**2 in 5 spectators and tournament  
volunteers have been inspired to do  
more sport and physical activity**

**LOBBYING  
POWER  
INCREASED**

**The players issued an open letter to prime  
ministerial candidates, requesting that  
every girl in England has an equal right  
to access football in schools**

**THE GOVERNMENT  
ANNOUNCED A  
SUBSTANTIAL PACKAGE  
FOR SCHOOL SPORT,  
INCLUDING  
FOOTBALL**

# WORLD ROWING COASTAL CHAMPIONSHIPS AND BEACH SPRINT FINALS, WALES 2022

**The World Rowing Coastal Championships and Beach Sprint Finals (WRCCBSF) set out to become the first ever rowing event to achieve an ISO 20121 certification in being a sustainable event.**

This was provisionally approved in August 2022, and a sustainable event management system, to better manage the event's social, economic and environmental impacts, was developed.

## Focus areas

ISO 20121 looks across three areas of sustainability: social, economic and environmental, but it does not prescribe exactly what areas within these your event should focus on.

WRCCBSF adopted a multi-agency approach to identify key stakeholders for the event, including across the world of rowing and the host community, before pinpointing the most significant issues to address.

In the end, four priority areas were drawn out:

1. responsible use of resources
2. participation and reach
3. protecting people and the planet
4. operation and ethos.

The four areas were accompanied by 33 specific targets and actions that were monitored and used to show how the event complied with the ISO standard.



## What is ISO 20121?

ISO 20121 is a standard that has been designed by the International Organization for Standardization to help organisations in the events industry improve the sustainability of event-related activities, products and services. It applies across social, economic and environmental impact.



The ISO 20121 certification for the event has been one of our greatest achievements and from which learnings are most widely being distilled. By going through ISO as opposed to a general sustainability objective, has meant we were held accountable for consulting widely, measuring our KPIs accurately and ensuring that sustainability was a consideration in everything we did.

**British Rowing Event Director, Rachel Dulai**

### **Plan development**

WRCCBSF was hosted in the rural landscape of Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, with nationally important nature reserves, geology and archaeology found in the local area.

From the initial planning phases of the event, it became clear that social, financial and environmental sustainability were of shared importance to the event partners, leading to the objective of seeking the ISO 20121 certification as a route to boost local communities, support the local economy, and minimise the event's impact on local and global environmental ecosystems.

During the initial planning phase, the multi-agency team, comprising members of key event and local stakeholders, incorporated a rigorous sustainable event management system, which served to:

- identify the environmental, economic and social impacts of the event
- establish measures and practices to monitor and reduce environmental impacts
- engage event stakeholders and local communities around the importance of sustainability for the overall event and for British Rowing.

To fulfil the requirements of the plan, a Sustainability Manager was secured through a secondment from the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, with the assistance of a sustainability consultant who specialised in assisting events through ISO 20121.

## Partners

WRCCBSF's main partners were:

- UK Sport
- Welsh Government
- Saundersfoot Harbour
- Pembrokeshire County Council
- Pembrokeshire Coast National Park
- Welsh Rowing
- British Rowing
- World Rowing

The event's sustainability mission was supported more widely by a further group of 14 partners, from non-government organisations (NGOs) to local rowing and sailing clubs.

## Key learnings

1. Capturing the learnings as to why KPIs were or weren't achieved is more important than achieving the KPI.
2. Having one person on the organising committee whose sole function is sustainability, helps drive activity forward consistently.
3. Consulting as widely as possible, before creating KPIs to get buy-in from all stakeholders makes achieving them easier and everyone takes ownership.
4. Putting measurement tools in place at the start of the event makes it easier to understand the impact your interventions are having.
5. Don't let perfect be the enemy of good – ensure you are using your resources efficiently and not spending too much time striving for absolute perfection in one area, to the detriment of others.



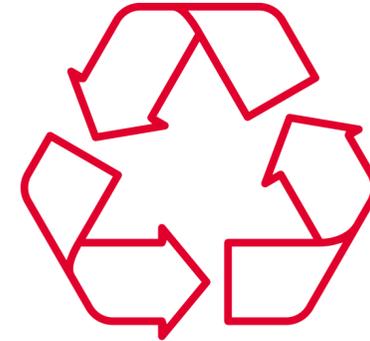
## Results

Across the event's 33 targets and KPIs, achievements included:



Water refill stations saved the equivalent of 4,000 plastic bottles

**NO SINGLE USE PLASTICS PURCHASED BY THE EVENT AUTHORITY**



60% recycling rate achieved for street waste collection

**PROVISION OF FOUR BEACH WHEELCHAIRS WITH A TARGET OF 25 UNIQUE USERS SURPASSED**

**53%**  
OF VOLUNTEERS WERE LOCAL

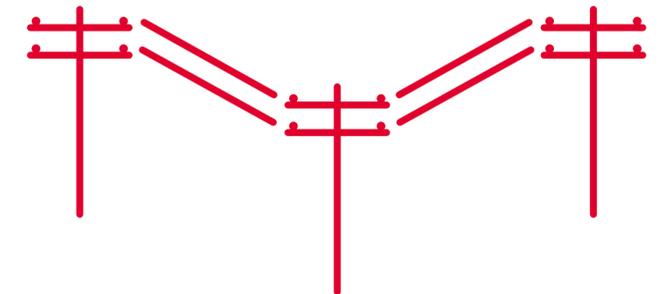
(target 50%)



Two schools' events engaged 400 pupils

MEASURED AND REPORTED ON SCOPE 1, 2 & 3 CARBON EMISSIONS OF THE EVENT

(2,287 tonnes CO2e generated)



Created a power plan that maximises use of grid energy and uses hybrid generators where needed (Total power usage 2,752 kw)

# 4.

## How UK Sport can help

**Our support for our funded major events continues to evolve according to developmental priorities and the needs of the sector.**

As of March 2023, our support for funded major events includes:

- planning templates, examples and crib sheets
- guidance documents
- support for event working groups
- support with key appointments and tenders.

Please keep in contact with the UK Sport team to hear more about our developing areas of work.

- Annual Value of Events reporting.
- eventIMFACTS.com review and potential re-development.
- Future Knowledge Transfer events (online and in-person).
- The publication of our Environmental Sustainability Strategy and provision of support eg Carbon Literacy training.

To find out more please contact Matt Wookey